

# **PERSONAL BRANDING CHECKLIST**

## DEFINE YOUR PERSONAL BRAND WITH TOPRESUME'S CHECKLIST

Do you want to land your dream job? Then, you have to know your personal brand and speak to it on every platform: online, on paper, and in person. Not sure what a personal brand is? Don't worry, we'll explain.

To get you started, TopResume and I created a checklist to help you define and manage your personal brand so you're set up for a successful job search.

And, should you get stuck along the way, [TopResume is always here to help!](#)

Happy hunting!



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## WHAT IS A PERSONAL BRAND?

Your personal brand is how the world views you. Some people refer to it as your “professional reputation” or “image.”

It’s a combination of your strengths, technical skills and the unique qualities you bring to your work. And it’s incredibly important when you’re conducting a job search.

### Your brand starts with you.

In today’s competitive job market, employers want to know more about you than just your education, your work history and the technical skills. They also care about your talents and abilities—the unique qualities you bring to an organization that set you apart from other job seekers.

It doesn’t matter whether you field customer complaints or code numbers for a living. When you look for a new job, you become a marketer. You must market the most important product of your career: your candidacy.

This is where personal branding comes in. Once established, your brand is a tool that helps you market yourself consistently across multiple channels: on paper (resume), online (social media) and in person (interviews and networking events). The following checklist will help you define this brand and incorporate it throughout your job-search.

## YOUR BRAND, DEFINED

Think about your strengths and abilities.

No one is great at everything. Complete the following activities to help you identify your key skills and talents in the workplace that define your personal brand.

- **Make a list of all the jobs, internships and volunteer roles you've held.**  
Identify the positions where you did best, and write down the skills you leveraged or gained during those experiences.
- **Brainstorm a list of attributes that best describe you.**  
Also, ask those who know you best—current and former colleagues and so forth—to do the same.
- **Rediscover your talents.**  
Comb through old performance evaluations, kudos you've received and other assessments for more information on your perceived talents.
- **Then, combine all the lists, take a step back and look for themes.**

[You can also turn the results into a word cloud so you can see which words are used most.](#)

The idea is to get a better handle on your strengths—what defines your personal brand—and use this information to position yourself for the job search.

Figure out your goals.

When your job goals are clear, it's easier to take an honest look at your current brand and figure out if it's supporting or sabotaging these goals. Ask yourself the following questions and write down your answers.

- **Where do you want to go next?**  
Are you looking for the next step up the corporate ladder or do you want to change careers entirely?
- **Take a hard look at your work experience.**  
Consider what you liked most about each position and what you wished was different. In which roles did you shine best and why?
- **Where do you see yourself in five or more years?**  
What would you like to be known for at work?

If you're unsure where you want to go next with your career, [give these job-goal exercises a try.](#)

## YOUR BRAND, ON PAPER

Update your resume.

As your career progresses and your goals change, your resume's format will also require some revisions.

Make sure your resume is ready to compete in today's competitive job market by following the steps below.

Gather all the information you'll need to craft a powerful document. This includes your:

- Work experience
- Accomplishments and major contributions
- Awards
- Education and certifications
- Volunteer work
- Professional memberships.

[Use this list to prepare for your resume rewrite.](#)

Resume objective statements are outdated.

Replace your resume objective statement with a professional summary that highlights your qualifications for the role, like record of achievement, experience level, value, field and current goals.

Click on the following link for more tips on [crafting a professional summary](#).

Request a free resume review from TopResume.

Get a better sense of how your current resume would fare in today's job market. You'll receive feedback on formatting, keywords and what to work on.

Need more help?

[Hire a TopResume professional writer to do the heavy lifting for you.](#)

**Job seekers are 40% more likely to get noticed with a professionally-written resume.**



## YOUR BRAND, ONLINE

### Audit your online presence.

Run a Google search on your name as it will appear on your resume. Then, review the results.

Do your professional profiles appear toward the top of the first page of results? If not, make sure your name on these accounts is spelled exactly the same way as it will be on your resume.

Is there anything on the first page of results that concerns you? If so, take a screenshot of the page and make a note of the URL. Do NOT click on the link multiple times or share it with others.

- **“Push down” bad listings.**

Create more online content, like new professional social media accounts on sites like [About.Me](#), an online portfolio (for creative fields), bios on your professional associations’ sites or a blog (for writers).

For more help, check out the following resources:

- [ReputationManagement.com](#)
- [Reputation.com](#)
- [ReputationManagementConsultants.com](#)

If something can't be removed, be prepared to answer any questions that may come up during an interview.

**93% of recruiters will review a candidate's social profile before making a hiring decision.**



### Protect your social media accounts.

Make sure your social media habits are supporting your job search, not sabotaging it.

- **Make a list of your social media accounts.**

Decide which ones you plan to use to support your brand during your job search. This includes—but is not limited to: Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Vine, Google+ and YouTube.

- **Change usernames on personal accounts.**

Using something other than what appears on your resume, such as a nickname or your first and middle name.

- **Increase the security settings on your personal social media accounts.**

Then, you control who sees what.

## Clean up your online act.

Once your resume is updated, it's time to make sure your professional social media accounts align with your current career goals.

**Make sure your name is consistently represented** across your resume and any online accounts you want to associate with your personal brand.

If the account allows you to include your work history and education, **make sure all the information matches your resume.** This includes the company names, employment dates, job titles, institutions attended and degrees earned.

**If you haven't created a LinkedIn profile yet, it's time to make one.** Here are some tips to show off your personal brand on your LinkedIn profile.

- **Customize your profile URL.**

This is an easy way to extend your brand and help people find you online. Click on the following link to learn how to [customize your LinkedIn profile's public web address.](#)

- **Include a professional profile picture.**

Opt for a standard head shot (400 x 400 plus pixels) that portrays you as professional and friendly. Avoid group shots, awkward selfies or cropped images.

**Your LinkedIn profile is 40% more likely to get clicked on when you [include a profile picture.](#)**



- **Add work samples.**

Work samples give employers a better sense of your abilities. Add links and upload presentations, videos and images of past projects that show your expertise and skills. [Here's how.](#)

- **Request recommendations.**

We often make decisions based on what we hear from trusted sources. [Request recommendations](#) from your former colleagues on LinkedIn.

Click on the following link for additional [LinkedIn best practices.](#)

Need more help writing your LinkedIn profile? [Contact TopResume today.](#)

## YOUR BRAND, IN PERSON

Develop your pitch.

If you get “[Tell me about yourself](#)” in an interview or “What do you do for a living?” at a networking event, you should be prepared with an elevator pitch.

An elevator pitch is one of the many ways you’ll communicate your brand to those with whom you speak over the phone or during a face-to-face meeting or job interview.

**Brainstorm responses to the following questions:**

- Who am I?
- What am I great at and passionate about?
- How do my strengths and skills provide value to potential employers?

**Draft a short introduction that shows the other person the value you bring to the table.** Think of it like a television commercial. You want it to be short, yet interesting enough, to hold the person’s attention for about 30 seconds.

**Practice reciting your pitch out loud, in front of a mirror.** If possible, record yourself on your phone so you can play it back and evaluate your delivery. Consider the following points when critiquing your pitch:

- **Timing:** Did I stay within the 15-45 second timeframe?
- **Speed & Volume:** Did I speak too quickly, slowly, softly or loudly?

**The number one question most likely to be asked is: “Tell me about yourself.”**



- **Tone:** Was my pitch conversational enough, or did it sound over-rehearsed? Did I sound genuine? How was my energy level?
- **Professionalism:** Did I use a lot of filler words (“um,” “like,” “so”) or repeat a particular phrase too many times? Did I sound confident?
- **Content:** Was my pitch interesting? Was it memorable? Did my information make sense, given the audience?

Your delivery, the details on which you elaborate and your use of industry-specific terminology will depend upon the audience and occasion. For instance, your elevator pitch at a job interview will be very different from how you pitch yourself to a friend of a friend at a party.

Click on the following link for more help [developing your elevator pitch](#).



## Reevaluate your appearance.

Experts agree that everything, from your [clothing](#) and grooming habits to your hygiene and hairstyle, can affect your professional advancement. Make sure your appearance supports your personal brand with the following tips.

- **When was the last time you updated your professional wardrobe and interview outfit?**  
Remember, clothing has an expiration date. Make sure everything is stain-free, pressed and fits you properly.
- **Think about the work environment of your current or target employer.**  
[Does your work wardrobe fit with the company culture?](#)
- **Ask a trusted stylist for his or her honest opinion about your hairstyle.**  
Ensure you're not dating yourself with the wrong look.

**It only takes a tenth of a second for someone to form an opinion of you.**



## Make the right impression.

First impressions matter. In as little as a [tenth of a second](#), your interviewer will evaluate your candidacy based upon your appearance, body language, clothing, and attitude. Once it's formed, someone's opinion of you can be tough to change.

These tips will help you make the right impression.

- **Show up on time.**  
Arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled interview so you have time to freshen up and get your bearings before the interview begins.
- **Dress the part.**  
Research the company to get a sense of their dress code. If the organization is laid back, dress as you think they would for an important client meeting. The goal is to look like you belong at the company.
- **Watch your body language.**  
Nonverbal cues have more than four times the impact as verbal cues. Give a firm handshake, look your interviewer in the eye and don't forget to smile!
- **Strike a confident pose.**  
Avoid slouching or leaning back in your chair, crossing your arms or cramming your hands into your pockets. You want to appear relaxed, confident, professional and, of course, friendly.
- **Do your homework.**  
When you properly prepare for an interview, your body language will automatically appear more relaxed and confident during the process.

## ABOUT TOPRESUME

TopResume is the world's largest resume-writing service. We've helped over 300,000 professionals land more interviews and get hired faster.

With TopResume, you'll work with an expert writer to create a resume that:

- Showcases your achievements, experience and career goals in a professional design.
- Highlights the keywords and skills that recruiters seek.
- Gets you more interviews, faster, by telling the best version of your story.

[Learn more about how we can help you.](#)

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